
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1320 19th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	June 28, 2012	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	09-036	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition

Makhmad Aliev, representing Levante's Restaurant, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a sidewalk café awning structure in public space. The building to which the enclosure would be attached is the Sunderland Building (1969), a nine-story, poured concrete and glass office building located on the corner of Sunderland Place and 19th Street; it is non-contributing to the Dupont Circle Historic District.

The public space on the 19th Street side of the building is used by Levante's for outdoor seating. A narrow, irregularly shaped raised concrete planter separates the seating area from the public sidewalk.

Proposal

The proposal calls for erecting a permanent open metal frame that would support a retractable fabric awning. The frame would project approximately 16 feet from the building at the first floor level stopping 11 feet from the edge of the public sidewalk. The structure would measure 36 feet across, pulled in from the corners of and roughly centered on the building's 92 foot long 19th Street elevation.

The structure would be attached to the face of the building, resting on only two posts that would connect to the inside edge of the raised planter. The top of the structure would have four cross members that would have tracks on which the fabric awning would open and retract. The precise profile and finish of the frame are not specified.

The applicant's intent is to maintain the awning in its open position except in the event of direct summer sun or light rain, when it could provide protection and usability to the outdoor café. The three sides of the structure would remain open.

Evaluation

The proposed enclosure is not incompatible in materials, proportions and overall character with the building to which it is being attached. However, the applicable standard under the preservation law for alterations to non-contributing buildings is whether the alteration is compatible with the character of the historic district. The primary preservation issue that the Board has considered in the review of enclosures or

structures in public space has been on their impact on the open character of the public space and the views up and down a street.

Public space is an important character-defining feature of the Dupont Circle Historic District and the L'Enfant Plan. The solid/void relationship formed by buildings aligned along a common setback and the open spaces formed by street rights-of-way is a fundamental three-dimensional characteristic of the L'Enfant Plan, and has been a basic, historic organizing principle in the development of Washington. The uniform setbacks of buildings and the open character of public space is an important element in establishing the setting and relationship between buildings in the historic district. For this reason, solid enclosures that extend forward of the building restriction line into the public space are generally not appropriate, as they disrupt the continuous open character and vistas through these rights-of-way.

While the Board has typically found enclosures in public space to be incompatible, it has generally found open awnings for outdoor cafés in commercial areas to be appropriate if they are sufficiently lightweight in feeling and do not intrude on important views. In 2009, the Board found a proposed enclosure at 1666 Connecticut Avenue (on the R Street side of the building) to be incompatible for its disruption of views down R Street, however, it was determined to be compatible when redesigned as an open awning structure similar to the current proposal. In this instance, the applicants have pulled the projection of the awning structure back from the edge of the public sidewalk to the backside of the planter to ensure that it does not intrude disproportionately into the public space and to retain views of the historic properties to the south.

The landscape within the raised planter is not currently well maintained, and includes dead plants and unplanted areas. As part of the project, the applicants should develop and execute a landscape plan that enhances its condition.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the proposed public space awning structure as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act. The construction plans should include a landscape plan for the raised planter.